

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A method for operating a metering valve (31) which determines a flow rate of a reagent to be introduced into an exhaust gas area (13) of an internal combustion engine (10),  
wherein a diagnosis of the metering valve (31) is provided, a measure of the flow rate being analyzed during a diagnosis time (T3).
2. The method as recited in Claim 1,  
wherein the diagnosis is started with a first start signal (24) which triggers a diagnosis device (41), and the amount of reagent dispensed by the metering valve (31) during the diagnosis time (T3) and collected in a graduated beaker is analyzed.
3. The method as recited in Claim 1,  
wherein a pressure difference (P3) is used as the measure of the flow rate of the metering valve (31).
4. The method as recited in Claim 3,  
wherein after a diagnosis start signal (24, 35, 40, 42) has occurred with the metering valve (31) closed, the reagent is brought to a predefined diagnosis starting pressure (P1) by a pump (27), that the metering valve (31) is then set at a predefined flow rate and the pressure difference (P3) occurring during the diagnosis time (T3) is analyzed.
5. The method as recited in Claim 4,  
wherein the pressure difference (P3) is fixedly predefined, and a warning signal (43) is provided when the diagnosis time (T3) exceeds a predefined diagnosis time limit (T3max).
6. The method as recited in Claim 4,  
wherein the diagnosis time (T3) is fixedly predefined, and a warning signal (43) is supplied when the pressure difference (P3) exceeds a predefined pressure difference limit (P3max) during the diagnosis time (T3).

7. The method as recited in Claim 1,  
wherein an adaptation of a metering valve signal (26) delivered by a metering control unit (21) to the metering valve (31) during metering operation is provided as a function of an ascertained measure for the flow rate.
8. The method as recited in Claim 3,  
wherein an adaptation of a metering valve signal (26) delivered by a metering control unit (21) to the metering valve (31) during metering operation is provided as a function of the pressure difference (P3).
9. The method as recited in Claim 3 or 4,  
wherein the diagnosis is started with a first diagnosis start signal (24) supplied by an internal combustion engine control unit (16) and/or with a second diagnosis start signal (35) supplied by a freeze cycle counter (34) and/or with a third diagnosis start signal (40) supplied by an after-running control unit (60) and/or with a fourth diagnosis start signal (42) supplied by a diagnosis device (41).
10. A device for performing the method as recited in one of the preceding claims.